

GOD'S OPENED DOOR

JERUSALEM COUNCIL, PART II, ACTS 15:6-11

How did you see God working in your life this week? (Romans 1:11, 12)

BACKGROUND: See **Acts 14:27**. **Acts 15** confirms for all mankind the role of the Holy Spirit, grace, and faith as foundational for the church.

IS A FACT. The Pharisees did not accept the fact that the Holy Spirit had been poured out on Jews and Gentiles in Caesarea, Antioch, and other places. “None are so blind as those to whom religion is mainly a matter of ritual.” Alexander Maclaren, Expositions of Holy Scripture, Vol. 12, p. 82 (**Acts 15:5-8, Acts 10:44-46, fn 10:45, Acts 11:19-24, fn 11:19-21, Colossians 1:3-6, fn 1:6, Ephesians 5:18, fn 5:18**) *Do you feel your worship is prompted by the Holy Spirit or is it just ritual?*

IS THROUGH FAITH. “Experience has proved that anything whatever introduced as associated with faith ejects faith from its place and comes to be recognized as the means of salvation.” Maclaren, p. 81. It is not faith plus circumcision, faith plus baptism, or faith plus “you name it.” As we look in faith to Jesus on the cross, He purifies our hearts. (**Acts 15:9, Acts 10:39-43, fn 10:37-43, John 3:10-15, fn 3:14, 15, Romans 9:30-33, fn 9:32, Hebrews 11:6, fn 11:6[1st]**) *Why does God require faith alone as the requirement for our acceptance by Him?*

IS BY GRACE. God did not open a “door of law” (an unbearable yoke) in the New Covenant but rather a “door of grace.” Grace is God’s work or power. It is what He has done to make us acceptable to Himself. Law or works are what we try to do ourselves in order to make ourselves acceptable to Him. Our salvation is dependent upon His grace and our response of faith that trusts the work that Jesus has already done for us. (**Acts 15:10-11, fn 15:10, Galatians 5:1-4, fn 5:2-4, Romans 11:6, fn 11:6, Ephesians 2:4-9, fn 2:8-10, Hebrews 12:15**) “The thief’s forgiveness reminds us that there is more grace in God’s heart than sin in our past.” Erwin Lutzer, Cries from the Cross, p. 69. *How does knowing this affect your life in Christ?*

Pray for one another’s needs.

Who in your group needs your encouragement by phone or personal attention?

